

# Assurance in Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. If you have your Bibles, would you please turn with me to Colossians chapter 2. And if you don't know who I am, my name is Daniel Shear.

I've been able to serve as the intern here for the past five months or so. And I've actually had the privilege of being here for nine years as well, even before being an intern.

And I'm currently a student at Cedarville, getting my master's degree, the MDiv, which is a ministry degree. And I just want to say, like, it's good to see you all here today.

And it's good to be here and have the privilege of opening up the Word with you all and just worshiping God together. I was told to tell you about the prayer cards this morning as well.

So this month, as a church, we want to focus on prayer. Not that we aren't supposed to be praying the rest of the year, but this month in particular, we want to just come together as a church and just consider and think about the importance of prayer in our lives as believers, as the church.

[ 1 : 07 ] And as we continue to study through Colossians, just thinking about how we can memorize the book together or parts of the book and be in prayer through the book, praying God's words back to him and just desiring to just have a love for God and a love for his people and a love for the gospel in the world that needs the gospel.

And so if you just—there should be cards out by the doors and also at the Welcome Center. So if you haven't already, please go ahead and grab one of these cards. You can put them in your pocket. You can put them in your wallet.

Whatever else you can think of, just put this somewhere just to remind you of prayer throughout the week and throughout the day. There's some prompts on the back to just keep in mind as well.

So it can be just a helpful tool for us to just—this month in particular—to think about prayer together. So let me just go ahead and open us up with another word of prayer. God, we recognize that we are completely dependent on you.

Would you please open up our ears to hear your word? And may we come and worship you together as your people. May we know you and may we know what your Son has done for us.

[ 2 : 28 ] And through that, may we also be assured and stand firm in our faith, knowing what you have done on our behalf. May we believe in the gospel and live out the gospel.

And may we be encouraged as well by the truth that your Son, Christ, dwells in us. In your name I pray. Amen. Amen. So, as I was a camp counselor just a couple years ago, and one thing that I recognized about the pattern of how the speakers would come in is they would start on the first day, so on Sunday night, they would start with a gospel presentation.

And after this gospel presentation, they would have this altar call and try to get everyone on the same page that this is the gospel, you must believe it. And then throughout the week, they would go through their topic until they got to Wednesday.

Wednesday night, they would have a talk about assurance of salvation. They wanted all the kids, after making a profession of faith, and those who had already believed in the gospel, to then know that they can be assured of their salvation.

And I recognize that this is an important discussion for us as the church and believers to affirm as well, is we can have assurance in salvation.

[ 3 : 51 ] Although I may not agree with some of the camp speakers and how they presented assurance, they would sometimes fall short in some aspects.

Some camp speakers would talk about how all you needed to do was believe in the gospel and everything else doesn't matter. You know, you can live however you want, you can listen to do whatever you want, you can do whatever you want, and no one could even know that you're a Christian, but since you said that you believed in the gospel, then you're fine.

And on the other hand, there were some speakers who fell short because they only focused on, well, just look at the fruit of your life. Look at all the actions that you're doing. Are you reading the Bible every day? Are you praying every day?

Are you memorizing scripture? Are you saying the right things? Are you going to church? Church, just look at the fruit of your life, and then you'll know that you're saved. And not all the speakers did that, but it was unfortunate to see how many people fell into either one of those two categories.

And as we read through this passage, we're going to be reading Colossians 2, 1 through 10. Paul talks about assurance of salvation for the believer.

[ 5 : 02 ] What the assurance of salvation is, and what it does for us. And so I'm just going to go ahead and begin by reading those first 10 verses of chapter 2.

So if you have your Bibles, please turn there. If you have the Pew Bible in front of you, you can find it on page 983. And it just says this. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I say this in order that you may not be deluded with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Therefore, as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught abounding in thanksgiving.

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human traditions and the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

[ 6 : 36 ] For in him all the fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

I think we can all agree that we want some sort of consistency in our life. I know growing up, I loved having my seat, my designated seat at the dinner table, and whenever I didn't get that designated seat, I was a little upset.

Or even at school, like a lot of my classmates, we want to have our assigned seats, you know, in each of the classes. And when that order is messed up, we kind of are like confused.

But if you know anything about this world, you know that it's not consistent. For even someone as young as I am, I know that just a couple of years ago, the fads and the traditions and the words that were used are now no longer used.

You know, like the 6-7, is that a new thing, right? I've heard about that. Don't know what it means, but, you know. And for those who are older, you don't even know what that means. Like the world is constantly changing.

[ 7 : 43 ] The terminologies that people use are changing. Even technology, it wasn't even a thing before I was born, and now, like, it's taken off.

And so everyone has a phone. And so the world has changed so much. But Paul says here that we can have assurance. We can have a firmness in our faith.

And why is that the case? It's because it's not based on the world and the teachings of the world, but we have firmness and assurance because our assurance is in Christ and in what he has done and in who he is.

Christ does not change. What he has done has not changed. And therefore, we can have assurance. So I just want to walk us through this progression in the passage.

It kind of follows this. I say this. You receive this. Do not be deceived. And so he begins a passage by saying, I say this. And then he moves on to, like, talking about what we have received and how we should walk.

[ 8 : 56 ] And then he'll end by talking about, do not be deceived. And so for each of those progressions, I'll give us a point. And so for that first point, it is that no, like, no Christ.

We have assurance by knowing Christ. And when we read this passage, he talks about, I say this. Like, what is this? What are you talking about, Paul? What are you referring to? What have you said? And the purpose of what he says is that we may not be deluded by plausible arguments. And so to look at the context, I want to walk through chapter 1 really quick and just point out, like, the first, like, verses 3 through 14, he kind of talks about knowledge of God.

In his prayer for them, starting in verse 9, he says that, And then this knowledge of God's will will lead them to walking in a particular manner, in a manner that is worthy of the Lord, walking in a way that desires to please God in all things.

And not only that, but they are also to increase in bearing fruit, and then increase in their knowledge of God. So again, Paul is praying that this church would know God, that they would increase in their knowledge of God, and that God would strengthen them so that they're able to endure with joy, endure through the trials and temptations that they face.

[10:29] And then he talks about in verses 11, sorry, verses 12, saying giving thanks to the Father. So again, he continues to expound on this knowledge of God. What has the Father done for you?

Well, he has qualified us to share in the inheritance with the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

So we are no longer like the world, given over to the domain of darkness. But God has saved us, he has redeemed us, and has set us into this new kingdom, with his Son as the head and king.

And his Son has somehow made redemption possible, the forgiveness of sins possible. And so the second part of chapter 1 talks about knowledge of Christ.

Who is Christ? Well, Christ is the image of the invisible God. So if you want to know God, you have to know Christ. And then it says that Christ is the creator of all things.

[11:37] For through him and for him, all things were created. He holds all things together. He is before all things. He is the preeminent one. And Christ is the head of the body, the church.

And so Paul talks about this knowledge of God, and this knowledge of Christ, who is God, who reveals God. And then he talks about this knowledge of the gospel, which, again, is Christ.

He'll say that the mystery that was revealed to us, to the saints, to the church, is that Christ dwells in us. He talks about in verses 21 through 23, that Christ has redeemed us, he has reconciled us.

We who were hostile in mind and alienated, we were separated from the promise, the inheritance that God has given, being with him in heaven for eternity.

We were separated from that. But he has brought us in to this relationship. He has reconciled us. He made enemies friends. And this is not just for the Jews any longer.

[12:47] It's for the Gentiles. Everyone who believes in the name of the Lord will be saved. And so Paul, in chapter 2, says that he struggles for the church.

He wants them to be encouraged. He wants their hearts to be knit together in love to reach full assurance. Paul doesn't want them to be confused about their status before God.

He wants them to know for sure the gospel. And he says in verse 3, this assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

So if you want to know God, if you want to be assured, you must know Christ. And so Paul says, I say this, right, that you might have assurance in the knowledge of Christ.

I say that in order that you may not be deluded by plausible arguments. So if we know and understand Christ, what he has done for us, who he is, and that he dwells in us, we are guarded and have full assurance.

[14:08] And if you look back at the culture of Colossae, there were a lot of, the main form of entertainment was rhetoric. So you'd have a lot of speakers who were very skilled in grabbing people's attention and having a flow of logic and being able to captivate an audience in the way that they were communicating.

And so people would actually listen to them not because of the content of what was said, but because of the way that it was said, because of the oratory devices that were used. And so Paul's concerned that the Church of Colossae would also be captivated by these plausible arguments, this lofty speech that these speakers, these orators would use.

And this is also relevant to us today too. I know that there are many forms of entertainment that we also give ourselves to, such as movies, or music, or social media, or different forms of news.

And each of these mediums and modes of entertainment are trying to grab our attention, not because of the content with which they're trying to give us, but because they just want to buy us.

They want to buy our attention and just feed whatever we're willing to listen to. I was reading a book for one of my classes called Scrolling Ourselves' Death.

[15:45] And in one of the chapters, it was titled, Now This. And he was talking specifically about news and how it changed to a now this kind of culture.

Right? For one news article, you may read about an earthquake in the Philippines and the devastation that has come upon so many people there. And then the Now This, the next article, is about Gatorade and Cheetos getting a new natural dye makeover.

I read that last night just to try to find some examples. And it's crazy about how fast they want us to just grab our attention from one devastating event to a makeover on Gatorade and Cheetos.

And the way that they are trying to just inundate us and teach us what they think is important, and so then we actually lose sight of what is truly important.

Paul was concerned that the church of Colossae would also be captivated by this lofty speech to be deluded. And again, to be deluded is to be led astray by false beliefs.

[ 16 : 53 ] He didn't want them to be captivated by this speech that may have grabbed their attention and be a form of entertainment that actually caused them to believe false doctrine.

And so Paul wanted them to have full assurance. And where does full assurance come from? Well, it comes from knowing Christ. Full assurance comes from knowing Christ.

All wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. So these teachers who claim to have this special knowledge, they claim to know something beyond what Christ has already revealed to kind of grab our attention.

Paul says that that's not true. You must go to the word. You must go to knowing Christ, what I've already taught you, in order to be assured.

I think it's important for us to also consider and think about the voices that we're listening to.

[ 17 : 58 ] What is the music that we're listening to? Each of those have a message. I was just driving with a bunch of non-believers to Indiana and back, and just listening to some of the music that they listened to is like, it was kind of sad because you could hear the hopelessness of the artists.

And even the way that they're trying to captivate your attention and tell you this message that was apart from Christ. And I know a lot of believers who listen to that same kind of music.

They're listening to these voices. Again, the movies we watch do matter. We can't just move on quickly from one form of entertainment to another without considering what they're trying to teach us.

We must evaluate it with God's word and what we know about Christ. And then Paul, after saying this, reminds the church, for even though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, in order to see, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness in your faith in Christ.

Paul tries to continue to connect this church with the universal body of Christ. He doesn't want them to think that they're alone. They're not crazy for believing the gospel, but they are a part of something that's going on that's bigger.

[ 19 : 22 ] He already mentions in chapter 1, verse 23, that the gospel that they received has been proclaimed in all of creation.

Right? And even earlier in chapter 1, he mentions that just as the gospel is taking root in the church of Colossae, it's also taking root and increasing in the whole world.

And so this church is not alone. And Paul wants them to know that there's not only other local bodies around them, but that he wants to, he's there with them too. Even though he's not able to be there present in body, he wants to be there with them and encourage them through this letter and through his prayers.

He's there with them in spirit. And as I was reflecting on this and how it relates to us as well, I was even just encouraged and thanking God that we have leaders who are present with us.

They're not just there spiritually, but they're there with us shepherding us physically. And so just thinking about the way that God uses our leaders and our church to just help encourage us and point us to the truth.

[ 20 : 31 ] They're guarding us from false doctrine. And so just another way to be thankful for what God has done in our church here at Maranatha. And also thinking about the universal church, like how we can be present with those around us in our universal church.

church. We have several different missionaries we support. And so as we're thinking about prayer together as a church, like I would encourage you to consider praying, like picking a missionary and praying for them that we support.

Pray for their church. Participate with them in spirit. You know, as Paul desired and agonized over this church and prayed for them, like why don't we be a church who desires to pray for people and

believers that we haven't ever even met.

Desiring for their good order in the faith and desiring for God to keep them in their faith because we know that that's a work that God can do. And so moving on to our second point, we must walk in Christ.

The progression of the passage again is, I say this, you receive this, do not be deceived. And so what we have received, we also have to walk in.

[ 21 : 51 ] And so Paul says in chapter 2, verses 6 and 7, Paul reminds the Colossians church that they have already received Christ.

He's not questioning their salvation here. And so for all who have received Christ and have accepted Christ, our encouragement from God's word is that we may also walk in him.

And so as I was studying this, I just took a moment to reflect my own conversion, thinking about what God has done for me. That without God, I would not be where I am at right now.

I was thinking about Romans 5, 8 through 10, where it says, but God shows his love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved from the wrath of God. For if while we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

[ 23 : 15 ] And then Ephesians 2 also speaks that we were dead in the trespasses and sins in which we once walked, following the course of the world and following the prince of the power of the air. Right?

We were dead, but for some reason God, in his grace and in his love for us, made us alive together in him. There is a particular gospel that we received.

Let us not question that. Let us not allow the teachings of this world dilute us and lead us astray from what God has taught us in his word.

We must believe and hold firm to the faith that we have received, the gospel that comes in God's word. But also recognizing that when we walk, we're not walking as those who have, who can do this on our own.

This is not a work that we do of our own. This is a work of God. Just as we receive Christ by the work of God from death to life, so also we walk by the power of God.

[ 24 : 26 ] When Paul was confronting the Galatians church, there were teachers in that church that were telling them that they had to receive circumcision, these works of the law, in order to be saved.

That even though they received Christ in one way, that they had to be sanctified and be perfected in the faith through their own works. And a similar thing is happening to this church in Colossae.

There's teachers who are claiming that they have to do a bunch of works in order to maintain their salvation. But Paul says in chapter 3 in Galatians, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?

Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Right? It's so, it's almost stupid for us to think that being, by beginning our faith in Christ through the work of God on our behalf, that we could somehow receive sanctification and perfection through our own works.

That is, it's not possible to be sanctified without God's working in us. We are completely dependent upon His work. I was also just thinking about the fact that we can never get past the gospel.

[ 25 : 45 ] We can't ever get past the gospel. I have a friend at Cedarville, his name is Fletcher, and I just remember a couple times just talking with him and telling him about what I was learning in the Bible and mentioned, like, kind of briefly mentioned passing over a fact about the gospel to move on to my main point.

But he would stop me and his demeanor would change and he would just think, wow, isn't that such a wonderful truth that you just said about the gospel?

That our sins were forgiven? Like, wow, like, that's so amazing. Like, how could God allow us to be forgiven of our sins? How could He allow us to have this hope of being with Him in heaven?

I could just imagine Paul doing the same thing when he was writing this letter. Or, you know, through chapter 1 all the way up to this point where it's like, wow, like giving thanks to the Father who has transferred us from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of His beloved Son.

Like, I can't believe God would do such a wondrous thing. That man, Christ, has redeemed us. He has offered us forgiveness of sins.

[ 26 : 58 ] Wow, Christ is the image of the invisible God. God, if I know Christ, I get to know God. And that same Christ who is preeminent, He dwells in me.

Like, how can that even be true? Like, we cannot get past the gospel. I know so often I can open up God's Word and just quickly read through it and not be astounded by the wonder of the truths written within it.

but just as you receive Christ, we must also walk in Him. So just as amazing as the truths were when we first believed, those same truths apply to us as we seek to walk faithfully as believers. And the gospel hasn't changed, so that's why we can have assurance in our walk in Christ. Not just looking at the fruits that we have in our life, but knowing that God helps us grow.

God is the one who produces fruit in our lives as we grow in a knowledge of Him. And so, I'm just also thinking about how Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, 1 and 2, I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you.

[ 28 : 15 ] And this is the gospel by which you received and in which you stand and by which you are being saved. If you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

Again, the gospel remains the same. The same gospel that we received is the same gospel by which we are standing and by which we are being saved. There's a past, present, and future reality of the gospel that we received.

And so, Paul explains using three passive participles that we are rooted in Him, we are built up in Him, and we are established in the faith.

Those are all passive realities that are true of believers who walk in Christ. And I think it's interesting that he uses this passive tense to help us recognize that this is not something that we are actively doing.

Our walking in Christ is not dependent upon our striving, but it's dependent upon the work that Christ has done. So, the first participle is rooted in Him.

[ 29 : 28 ] And it's just helping give this agricultural sense of firmness. You know, I think about the Psalm 1 man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. He does not stand in the way of sinners.

He does not sit in the seat of scoffers. Like, this man does not follow the ways of this world, but he delights in the law of the Lord.

And on God's law he meditates day and night. So, there's a consistency. There's a rootedness in God's word. And so, he says that this man is like a tree planted by streams of water.

God gives him what he needs. He sustains him. This is also a, this word is in a perfect tense. So, it means that it happened one time.

So, he had been rooted. Which means that it doesn't change. Our rootedness in the gospel does not change. Once we accept Christ, we now live as those who have accepted Christ.

[ 30 : 28 ] Again, that's another sense of the assurance that we have. And then, the second sense is that we are built up. This one's in the present tense. So, it has this continuous sense.

And so, as we are continuing to grow and continuing to learn and continuing to know God, we are built up in him. So, not only have we been rooted in him, but we are also built up.

We grow in our knowledge of him. And as we grow in our knowledge of him, we're able to walk in him. The last one is talking about that we are established in our faith. So, there is a necessity of being established in our faith.

Again, this is not dependent on our own work. It's not based on aimlessly striving, but we have a goal. We have a message that we can believe in and know that God will be faithful.

And then, that last element found in the end of verse 7, it says, just as you were taught abounding in thanksgiving. So, again, just as we're not supposed to move past the gospel, we must respond appropriately to the gospel.

[ 31 : 36 ] Not just walking in him, but abounding in thanksgiving for all that he has done. You know, in 1 Thessalonians 5, he says that we must give thanks in all circumstances.

It's a pretty well-known phrase. And sometimes I wonder, like, okay, how can I give thanks in all circumstances? Like, you didn't know what happened to me yesterday, you know, or tomorrow is Monday.

Like, how am I supposed to be thankful then? But, we can be thankful in all circumstances because God does not change. What he has done for us does not change.

And so, we can be thankful in all things because we know that God is in control of all things. He's not dependent on our circumstances. So, our thanksgiving is not dependent on our circumstances either.

And so, God uses our thanksgiving and our contentment in every situation to help keep us in the faith as well and help remind us of our need for God and what he is doing for us.

[ 32 : 41 ] Helping us keep attentive to God's work and God's power. And so, that last point is that we are being filled in Christ.

We must not be deceived because we are being filled in Christ. It says, in verses 8-10, see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ.

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. And you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority. I think it's interesting right off the bat.

He begins by saying being taken captive. So, there's this contrast between you have received Christ but then don't be taken captive by these philosophies.

The philosophies of this world and from these teachers, they're trying to steal believers from the church. They're trying to steal them and take them captive from what they have received already.

[ 33 : 52 ] The gospel has been freely given. We have freely received it. So, we must be careful not to be taken captive by the teachings of this world.

I don't think it means like when he talks about not being taken captive by philosophy that philosophy is inherently evil. There are many church leaders who were trained in philosophy and so what I mean by that is reason is God-given but reason that stems from our self and from this world is empty deceit.

Reason that comes from God, knowledge and wisdom that comes from God is heavenly and can provide us with assurance. Right? We're not called as believers to not think but we must be aware and evaluate the philosophy of this world that is teaching empty deceit.

It's teaching us to trust in and be assured in ourselves. If you see the explanation he gives, this philosophy and empty deceit is according to human tradition, it's according to the human tradition, it's according to the elemental spirits of the world and it is not according to Christ.

And so it's important for us to evaluate the philosophies of this world. I was even just reminded of some of the professors I had at Cedarville who were philosophy majors and they were just telling me some stories about their classmates who just had no hope.

[ 35 : 31 ] They didn't even know what reality was because they were so caught up in their thoughts and in their imaginations and in the conceptual that they couldn't even think about what reality could be.

And so we must be aware of the things that seem to be wise, that seem to make sense, but are not according to the word.

Because philosophy that has a source other than Christ leads to deceit and it leads us to emptiness. the reason that Paul gives for why we should not be taken captive is because in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

These philosophers and teachers of the day assume that they have this special knowledge that can give people a higher sense.

You know, I can name a bunch of people that I've talked to that believed in this higher reality that if they just lived a certain way that they could become more spiritual.

[ 36 : 46 ] And it was very undefined characteristics. It didn't really have an end goal in mind. But Christ already is the fullness of God.

We don't have to go anywhere else. There's no other source that we need. Christ is the fullness of God. And he has filled us.

We have been filled in Christ. So we don't have to go anywhere else. And so just thinking about what this means for us this week.

how do we consider and evaluate the voices that we are listening to? How do we consider and evaluate the hope that we have, the assurance that we have in Christ?

You know, the last song that we sang talked about, I set my hope in Jesus. You know, even when the doubts remain or when we're tempted by sin or when we're discouraged, where is our assurance?

[ 37 : 56 ] Where is the firmness of our faith placed in? Where are we going to churn on Monday morning when we don't want to wake up? Where are we going to churn when we're tempted by sin on Thursday afternoon, whatever it may be?

Do we turn to the teachings of this world and just trying to put our earbuds in and just keep walking until we go to bed at night? Or are we going to take the moment to plead with God for help? Are we going to turn to the assurance in the gospel and walk in Christ? Again, Christ offers us assurance. And so as we turn to his word, as we turn to the believers that God has given to us, that we can be kept accountable, we're then able to then walk in Christ, rooted and built up in him. We don't have to doubt, we don't have to wonder, but we can worship and praise God, abounding in thanksgiving, knowing that we have been filled in Christ and he has a plan and purpose for us. Let me go ahead and just close this in a word of prayer. Dear Lord, I know, again, that we are desperately in need of you, but we're also so thankful for the work that you have done on our behalf.

[ 39 : 26 ] Thank you for the fact that you have sent your son to live on this earth. Your son who was fully God. He lived a bodily life and died a bodily death and rose again, defeating death.

And in him are hidden all wisdom and knowledge. And so as we turn to Christ, we can have assurance in our salvation, but only if we believe in what you have done for us.

Only if we believe in the gospel. Help us to not move past the gospel, but to worship you for what you have done. That you have delivered us from this domain of darkness and have transferred us to this kingdom of your beloved son.

Thank you so much for the redemption, the forgiveness of sins that is possible through your son, and for the inheritance that you have given to us, and for the redemption and reconciliation that you have bought with the blood of Christ.

And so help us to be aware of the false teachings of this world that seek to delude us and lead us astray. And may we fill our minds with truth.

[ 40 : 41 ] faith. May you use your church, your body, to encourage one another. May we seek to exhort one another every day as long as it is called a day, so that we may not be deceived by, may we not be led astray by the deceitfulness of sin.

In your name I pray. Amen. Hey, thank you all for coming. It's a pleasure to have you here, and thank you for the opportunity to preach. God bless you.